AFFIRMATION: UNITED METHODISTS FOR LESBIAN AND GAY CONCERNS

Post Office Box 1021 Evanston, Illinois 60204

FALL 1986

AUG 26 1986

UNITED METHODIST ARCHIVES

RECEIVED FEB 23 2024 BY:

FALL MEETING

Affirmation's next semi-annual meeting in Washington, D.C., on September 19-21 is rapidly approaching. Members of the Washington, D.C., local Affirmation group are busily preparing for this meeting which will focus on the theme, "Building Our Family." Work Sessions are planned for further developing the Reconciling Congregations program, Regional Orgainizing, our 1988 General Conference presence, newsletters and media relations, and organiational management systems. There will also be discussions on what it means to be family in the lesbian/gay context in which the church is not always sensitive nor supportive.

For those folks from the Northeast (ME, MA, NH, VT, RI, CT, NY, PA, NJ, DE, MD, DC, and Northern VA), there will be a special Regional Organizing event immediately before the start of the fall meeting. This meeting will be held Friday September 19, 12:30-5:00 pm so Northeast folks should plan on arriving during Friday morning.

Participants in the fall meeting should plan on arriving in D.C. area by 5:30 pm on Friday evening and leaving after 2:00 pm on Sunday. Those flying should use either Washington National, Dulles International, or Baltimore-Washington International airports (frequently Dulles is less espensive).

Here's a broad outline for the weekend:

Friday evening (beginning 7pm) - Orientation and Introductions; Worship/Reflections Session on the meaning of "family"; Opening reception.

Saturday morning & early afternoon - Work sessions on Affirmation's programs.

Later Saturday afternoon - Total group business session.

Saturday evening - Family dinner and "talent show" Morris Floyd's B-Day.

Sunday morning - Closing business & worship with Christ UMC.

Our previous two meetings have set records for attendance and quality of work. We hope new records at our next "family gathering" this fall. Join us in the Nation's Capitol this fall!

BRAINSTORMS

At the annual gathering of network members of the Oregon-Idaho Affirmation chapter meeting at conference in June, members brainstormed on how we can prepare (ourselves and our congregations) for becoming Reconciling Congregations. We share with you the results of those discussions:

Prepare yourself through reading and study, or getting to know open gay and lesbian persons.
Assume that there are always lesbian and gay persons in any group.
Speak out as a gay/lesbian positive person. Use inclusive language in worship.
Don't allow put-downs to pass by unchallenged. Use the words "homosexual, gay, lesbian" to diffuse "unmentionableness" of them.
Prayers of petition and intercession for gay/lesbian people and their families including specifics such as AIDS, Julian Rush.
Use gay/lesbian positive illustrations in sermons, liturgies, prayers.
Have a consistent theology of unconditional love. Preach on gay/lesbian issues.
Deal with issues out of the context of justice. Find ways to expand terminology of relationships: families: husband/wife, partners, significant others, single.
Have gay/lesbian positive literature in the literature rack. Provide resources.
When appropriate form a Reconciling congregation committee.
Ask the PPR or other committees how they would have the pastor answer the question: "Is this the church which welcomes gay and lesbian person?"
Discover and tell stories of church growth resulting from being a Reconciling Congregation.

NEWSLETTER

The next newsletter is scheduled to come out in the beginning of November. I need all articles, notices, and gossip in by October 27.

I would encourage you to use the Affirmation newsletter to share your experience and knowledge with other folk throughout the country. Editorials are welcome, we all benefit from hearing various viewpoints and beliefs held by our brothers and sisters.

Send all materials for the newsletter to Fritz Schultz, [redacted] San Francisco, California [redacted].

EDITORIAL

YES, CHRIST LIVES!

Our Methodist Federation for Social Action national executive committee joined the congregation of St. Paul's UMC in Denver for Sunday worship during our April meeting. This is the congregation served by Rev. Julian Rush, the openly gay minister whom some of his colleagues are trying to drive out of the ministry.

Folks in this church live under threat-very real threat. For instance the worship bulletin states:

We realize that some persons attend this church at great risk to their personal and professional lives. Therefore we request that each person's privacy be respected and that no assumptions be made about anyone's ability, sexual orientation, or point of view based on their participation in our services of worship or any other church activities.

The custom there on second Sundays is for the congregation to pick some hymns for the second hymn slot. One of the hymns chosen was "Once to Every Man and Nation," sung as "Once to Every Congregation." The last one chosen was "He Lives."

When I was growing up in Fort Wayne, Indiana, our Simpson Methodist Youth Choir sang "He Lives" every Sunday. Suddenly I was transported back over the years and felt a connection. I sang lustily, joyfully, as did everyone.

And after a moment of embarassment at enjoying singing such an "evangelical," "individualistic" hymn, I let the words in. In a flash I realized that the words of this hymn, then and there, were truer than I could ever have imagined. In that community of oppressed, joined by dedicated, caring MFSA colleagues, I knew that we do "serve a Risen Savior; he's in the world today".

For there, at St Paul's Church, I was truly part of a resurrection community, hurting and vulnerable, yet living by hope and faith stirred by the One who died yet rose again, giving new life. And so I could very much affirm that "I know that he is living, Whatever men may say..." - whatever those who ridicule Gospel solidarity with the oppressed may say (and more often than not they are men who scoff at Christ's love and bold promises).

This was a community that truly could sing "He lives, he lives, Christ Jesus lives today," which knows the Risen One as One who "walks with me and talks with me along life's narrow way"- a way made narrow and hurtful by rejection and misunderstanding.

And as can so often be experienced among Federation people, in the sharing, the anger, the hurt, the tears, the resistance, and the gifts of grace and hope, it's not just theory or bookish theology, it's very real and personal-"you ask me how I he lives? He lives within my heart!"

George D. McClain

This editorial was reprinted by permission from the Social Questins Bulletin published by the Methodist Federation for Social Action. For more information please write to: Social Questions Bulletin, 76 Clinton Ave., Staten Island, New York 10301.

The MFSA leaders met and worshipped at St. Paul's UMC, Denver, to show support for the Rev. Julian Rush, the openly gay pastor against whom charges have been brought. Julian carries on an outstanding ministry to AIDS victims and to the gay and lesbian community in the church's neighborhood.

In a statement adopted by the MFSA executive committee, the Federation termed the repeated bringing of charges against Julian Rush to be "harassment which interferes with a meaningful United Methodist minstry." MFSA stated that "these charges are being encouraged by a group outside the Rocky Mountain Conference who have no concept of the ministry of St. Paul's and other similar places" and called upon "United Methodists to respond in a spirit of love and reconciliation and to cease all interference with this needed and connectional ministry."

OPEN HANDS

OPEN HANDS becomes the new title of the journal for Reconciling Congregations, previously called Manna for the Journey. Responses to the first year of this publication have been very positive. We still need subscriptions to ensure this ministry is continued. OPEN HANDS did receive a grant from the Chicago Resource Center for $4000.00 but our support is still needed.

Upcoming issues include:

Fall 1986-Healing Ministries

Winter 1987-Homophobia

Subscriptions are $10.00 per year. Single copies of back issues are availabe for $3.00 a copy. Write to OPEN HANDS, P.O. Box 23636, Washington, D.C. 20026.

Annual subscription rates only cover the bare-bones cost of the publishing. Financial contributions from you and others provide for the printing of brochures and other promotional materials, training sessions for Reconciling Congregation enablers and much more.

REGIONAL ORGANIZING

NASHVILLE AFFIRMATION

The folks in Nashville sponsored an early summer retreat which drew twelve men and women and explored getting to know each other better and avenues of spiritual growth. The group continues its witness to the Tennessee Conference through a discussion/worship meeting on the fourth Wednesday at 7:30 and a potluck/fellowship every second Sunday at 4:30. Contact the group at P.O. Box 24213, Nashville, TN 37202.

MADISON AFFIRMATION

Madison Affirmation along with University U.M.C. and local Episcopal and Catholic churches, and Dignity/Integrity sponsored a joint meeting July 10th to consider practical responses by Christians to the AIDS epidemic. The Wisconsin Conference voted to commend the Reconciling Congregation Program to its churches, a proposal put forth by Affirmation's Steve Webster and Rev. Tom Garnhart of University U.M.C. Other events of the summer include celebrating Dignity/Integrity's ninth anniversary and a barbeque in the country. Join in the group's regular meetings and special events by contacting Steve Webster at [redacted] Madison, WI [redacted] or University U.M.C. at [redacted].

INDIANAPOLIS AFFIRMATION

Six members of the Indianapolis group will meet with the pastor of North U.M.C. on August 13th, to explore ways in which the group can be in ministry both to the congregation and to the lesbian and gay community of Indianapolis. The group meets on a called basis for social events, fellowhip and support. Get in touch with them through Marsha Knight, [redacted] Indianapolis, IN [redacted].

CHICAGO AFFIRMATION

Celebrating Gay Pride Week with a special worship service, the Chicago group meets monthly for a potluck, worship and discussion meeting. They report the group is growing and continues to be comprised of both men and women. Evidence that the Chicago folk have been instrumental in proclaiming the Gospel of Reconciliation: Northern Illinois at Annual Conference declared itself a Reconciling Conference! Become a part of the excitement by contacting Annette Oliver at [redacted] or David Gunnell at [redacted].

MINNEAPOLIS/ST PAUL AFFIRMATION

The Minneapolis/St Paul group has had an active spring and summer. Events include holding a successful fund-raiser, leading a lesbian, gay and young adult worship service in Loring Park, hosting an AIDS Memorial Service, and working with and in Wesley U.M.C. as it seeks to become a Reconciling Congregation. Upcoming outreach activities include hosting the Sunday morning coffee at Wesley U.M.C. every second Sunday, attending a Minneapolis Pops Orchestra concert, a planning retreat August 10th, a picnic on August 24th and "New Beginning" the first of the regular 2nd and 4th Sunday meetings for the fall on September 14th. Contact persons are Mike [redacted], Tim at [redacted] or Wesley U.M.C. [redacted].

SACRAMENTO AFFIRMATION

Twenty-three pastors and church staff persons attended a workshop sponsored by the Sacramento Affirmation group. Reaching out in the Delta District of the California-Nevada Annual Conference, the group plans to start its fall with a study of "The Road Less Traveled" by M. Scott Peck, M.D. Join the group for its monthly meeting by calling Ellie of Jeanne at [redacted].

BAY AREA AFFIRMATION

At June's meeting in Albany the group discussed what specfic things members can do concerning the AIDS crisis and the issue of homophobia/heterosexism. It was decided that part of each meeting time be used for letter writing. The group will be participating in the mobilization against the LeRouche Initiative in California. In July the group had a barbeque in San Rafael. Next meetings will be Sept. 14 and October 19. For further information call Jerry Lindberg at [redacted] or Fritz Schultz at [redacted].

LOS ANGELES AFFIRMATION

God's Spirit at work can be seen through the witness of the Los Angeles group at its booth at the California-Pacific Annual Conference. Through the group's work, the Conference passed a supportive AIDS resolution. The Los Angeles folks will continue their regular meetings and on October 5th, plans are underway for a first anniversary worship service, celebrating Crescent Heights U.M.C.'s adoption of its Statement of Reconciliation. Joining the service will be representatives of local Presbyterian "More Light" and

Lutheran "Reconciled In Christ" congregations. Find out more of the group's good news through [redacted] Los Angeles, CA [redacted] or by calling Lyle Loder at [redacted].

WESTERN NEW YORK AFFIRMATION

Lesbian and gay United Methodists minister to each other, the church and to the community through local clusters in Buffalo, Syracuse and Rochester. Participation in the Gay Pride Week Ecumenical Service, sharing with members of Parents FLAG, meeting regularly to view "Silent Pioneers," "Consenting Adult," and "The Life and Times of Harvey Milk" and involvement in Hamburg U.M.C.'s Seminar on Homosexuality are ways the group is impacting western New York. Become involved by writing (Buffalo) [redacted] Hamburg NY [redacted] (Syracuse) [redacted] Syracuse NY [redacted].

OKLAHOMA CITY AFFIRMATION

The Oklahoma City group has grown to over fourty men and women who meet twice monthly. They have explored ministry to those with AIDS with Dr. Larry Prater, celebrated The Lord's Supper, elected a coordinating committee, and enjoyed some great cooking. A thought provoking quote of Philippe Vernier from the group's local newsletter: "There are two kinds of liberty: the one we have, and the one to which we are called. The first belongs to every man, the second to the Christian." Their address: [redacted] Oklahoma City, OK [redacted] or call Richard at [redacted].

DALLAS/FORT WORTH AFFIRMATION

Approximately fourty-five men and women enjoyed Gene Leggett's narrative of the early days of Affirmation, complete with the exploits of the Sugar Plum Fairies at the June meeting. The group's carnival booth raised over $100.00 and over three hundred information pamphlets and tracts entitled "What Jesus Christ Said About Homosexuality" were distributed at Razzle Dazzle Dallas, the Gay Pride Week street party which over 7,500 gay men and lesbians and friends attended. Write [redacted] Dallas, TX [redacted] or call [redacted] or [redacted].

YELLOWSTONE AFFIRMATION

An Affirmation unit is being organized in the Yellowstone Conference. We want to hold our first meeting late September of early October. If you are interested or know anyone who would be interested please let them know and have them get in contact with us. If you have lived in Montana or Northern Wyoming please contact anyone still living here that would be interested. Contact Ron Lang, [redacted] Bozeman, MT [redacted] or call [redacted]. Bryan Spellman, [redacted] Missoula, MT [redacted].

****

Tim Tyner of Dallas, Texas is responsible for editing the Regional Organizing page of this newsletter. You can greatly assist Tim in his work by putting him on your local mailing list. His address is: [redacted] Dallas, Texas [redacted].

Spokespersons For Affirmation

Morris Floyd
[redacted]
Minneapolis, MN [redacted]
[redacted]

Mary Gaddis
[redacted]
Holy City, CA [redacted]
[redacted]

Coordinating Committee

Judy Cayot
[redacted]
Albany, CA [redacted]
[redacted]

Beth Richardson
[redacted]
Nashville, TN [redacted]
[redacted]

D.J. Porter
[redacted]
New Hope, PA [redacted]
[redacted]

Mary Gaddis
[redacted]
Holy City, CA [redacted]
[redacted]

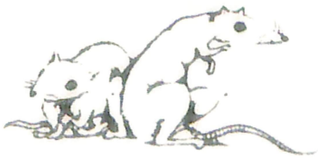
Maggie Roe
[redacted]
Lincoln, NE [redacted]
[redacted]

Mike Underhill
[redacted]
Chicago, IL [redacted]
[redacted]

Lyle Loder
[redacted]
West Hollywood, CA
[redacted]

Brad Rymph
[redacted]
Washington, DC
[redacted]

One lesbian and one gay man whose names cannot be used.



REGISTRATION FORM: FALL AFFIRMATION MEETING
"Building Our Family"

September 19-21, 1986
Washington, D.C.

(Please send this in as soon as possible!)

Name_____ Home phone (opt.) _____

Address _____ Work phone (opt.) _____

_____ Zip Code _____

Please include your registration fee payable to "National Affirmation".

I. Please check one of the following:

___ I am coming to D.C. My registration fee is enclosed.

___ I am coming to D.C. and will send in my registration by Sept. 10.

___ I cannot come to D.C. but want to enclose a contribution or newsletter subscription renewal ($15/yr.).

II. If you are coming to D.C. please give us the following information:

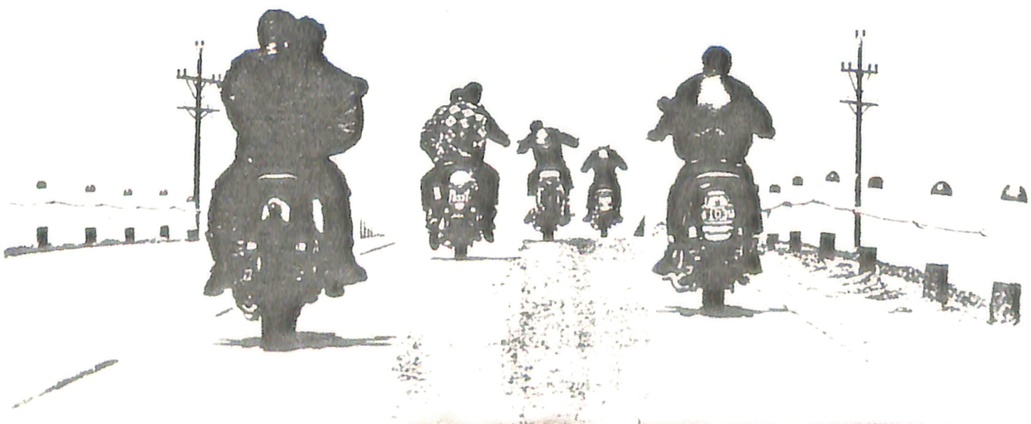
___ I am arriving on _____ (please give date) and will need housing in a private home from _____(date) to _____ (date). ___ I prefer a non-smoking home (please check).

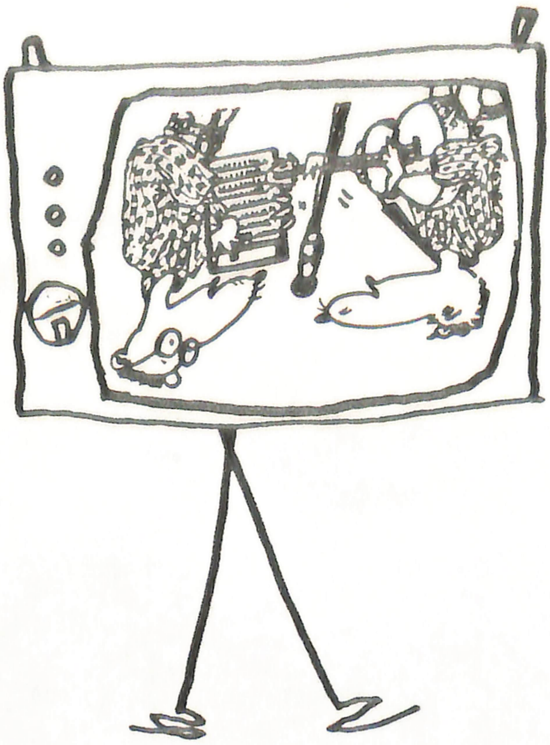
___ I am arriving on _____ (please give date) and would like information on nearby hotels (approx. $60 per night for a double) at which to stay.

___ I have special dietary and/or housing concerns (please state):

REGISTRATION FEE: $2.00 per $1000.00 of annual income, with a minimum of $10.00. Once registration is received, information as to local arrangements and directions will be sent to you.

PLEASE SEND THIS FORM TO: Peter DeGroote, 1325 18th Street, NW #603, Washington D.C. 20036 BY SEPTEMBER 10 (We cannot guarantee your choice after this date). Again, you will be sent exact information as to meeting sites, transportation from airports, etc. once your registration is received. IF YOU HAVE LAST-MINUTE CONCERNS (after September 10), call Peter at [redacted]. Again, PLEASE GET YOUR REGISTRATIONS IN ON TIME!





BETHANY UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
1268 SANCHEZ STREET
SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA 94114

Non-Profit Organization
U. S. POSTAGE
PAID
San Francisco, CA
Permit No. 7202

Comm. on Archives & Hist.

P.O. Box 127
Madison, NJ 07940

RENEWAL